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ENQUIRY 16

INTO THE ~~1029. eb~~
REASONS ~~22~~

OF THE

ADVANCE of the PRICE of COALS,
within *Seven Years* past.

In which are shewn,

The great Impositions laid on the several
Consumers by a Monopoly of that
Commodity. And some Methods pro-
posed for destroying the *Present*, and
preventing all *Future* Monopolies and
Combinations in the Coal Trade.



L O N D O N,

Printed for E. COMYNS, under the Royal Exchange.
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Competition in the Coal Trade
prevents all other foreign
ports for delivering the Product
Commodity. And for the reason
that by a monopoly of the
The great Impediment laid on the



TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Micajah Perry, *Esq*;

LORD MAYOR *of the*
City of London.

My LORD,



Cannot address to any
one more properly than
to Your Lordship, the
following Thoughts on
the Conduct of certain Gentlemen,
from whose Circumstances in the
World better Things might have

A 2

been

been expected ; especially, as Your Lordship was so eminently concerned in the Enquiry made in the last Session of Parliament, into the Abuses committed in the Coal-Trade, in Consequence of which the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of the City of *London* were impowered to fix the Price of Coals in that Port.

From the known Practice of the Parliament it may be pronounced, that it must be some notorious Abuse which produced a Law of that Nature. Yet Your Lordship will remember, with what Industry certain Gentlemen labour'd, to divert the Enquiry from the Source, and fix the Censure on a Set of Men who were rather Tools than Principals in the Abuses complained

plained of ; what Artifices were used, and what Pains taken, to prevent the inserting any Clause in the Bill then depending, that in the least might affect the Coal Owners, unless modell'd in such Manner as to leave room for the intended Effect to be eluded.

Gentlemen would act with more Honour, would they leave the Matter to the Decision of the unprejudiced, and for once decline the Office of Judges where they themselves are Parties.

Your Lordship's early Care in the Regulation of Juries gives room to hope for Your Patronage and Assistance in every Thing tending to the Public Good ; especially in this Case, wherein the City of
London,

London, at the Head of which
Your Lordship is worthily placed,
is in a particular Manner concern-
ed, as well as the Trade and Na-
vigation of the Kingdom in ge-
neral.

I am,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most Obedient

Humble Servant,



AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
REASONS
OF THE

ADVANCE of the PRICE of COALS,
within *Seven Years* past.



THE hot Disputes which have so long subsisted between the Dealers in the several Branches of the COAL TRADE, from *Newcastle* and the Ports adjacent, being likely once more to be brought on the Carpet in the approaching Sessions of Parliament, naturally lead to an Enquiry, Whence it happens, that notwithstanding all the Endeavours of the Legislature, and the many Laws which have, from Time to Time, been made for Regulation of that Trade, it remains still in as great Confusion

as ever; and the several Manufacturers and other Consumers of Coals, instead of being relieved by those Laws, find the Impositions on them daily encreasing, to the great Discouragement of Trade, and Oppression of the Poor, without any Possibility of knowing where they will stop, unless a further Remedy is provided for preventing some indirect Practices, which no Law, yet in being, can reach.

Some Thoughts on this Head I have thrown together, and flatter my self, that for thus troubling the World with them, I shall need no further Apology than the Importance of the Thing it self; for it is not barely a Quarrel wherein the Buyers and Sellers of Coals alone are concerned: No, its Consequences extend to every Family, in all those Parts of the Kingdom which are supplied with Coals from *Newcastle, &c.* For every Imposition of the Proprietors of Coal Mines, or their Agents, on the first Purchasers, or by the latter on the next, and so on, must finally fall on the Consumers, and will be severely felt by several Manufacturers, and by the Poor in general.

The Legislature have already declared their Sense of this Matter in the Preamble of an Act, passed in the ninth Year of the Reign of Queen *Anne*, entitled, *An Act to dissolve the present, and prevent the future Combinations of Coal Owners, &c.* in these Words, viz.
 “ Whereas the Cities of *London* and *West-*
 “ *minster*, and other Places, are chiefly sup-
 “ plied with Coals from the Counties of *Dur-*
 “ *ham* and *Northumberland*, and Town and
 “ County of *Newcastle upon Tyne*, and the
 “ having

“ having the same at cheap and reasonable
 “ Prices, tends greatly to the Improvement
 “ of the Manufactures, and Increase of the
 “ Trade and Navigation of this Kingdom,
 “ by breeding and employing many Thou-
 “ sands of skilful Mariners, for the Service of
 “ her Majesty, and Defence of the Realm,
 “ and to the Relief of the Poor ; and for that
 “ End, and for the better advancing the Du-
 “ ties upon Coals, granted to her Majesty
 “ for the carrying on the present War a-
 “ gainst the common Enemy ; it is necessary
 “ the same should not be monopolized, but
 “ that the Coal Trade should be free and
 “ open ; and that all Prejudices, Hindrances
 “ and Obstructions, that may any ways affect
 “ the said Trade, should be removed, pre-
 “ vented and hindered : Be it therefore en-
 “ acted, &c.

Monopolies and Combinations are in no
 Case justifiable : But, where the Improvement
 of Manufactures, and the Increase of Trade
 and Navigation are obstructed by them, they
 certainly deserve particular Animadversion.
 Accordingly all the Laws hitherto made about
 Coals, have tended directly to the Removal
 and Prevention of them. That the End has
 not been gained, seems to me to be owing to
 this ; That the true State of the Affair has
 never been laid before the Legislature, nor is
 it at all surprising that it has not.

In Disputes about a particular Trade, it
 cannot be supposed that any great Number of
 the Members of either House, have any previ-
 ous Knowledge of the Circumstances of that
 Trade, or the Merits of the Question ; conse-

quently they can have no other Rule to form a Judgment by, than the Information they receive on the Occasion from the Parties. The Complainers open as much of the Case as suits their Purpose ; and their Opposers open just what suits theirs ; both Parties studiously concealing what is not their particular Interest to have published ; and if perchance, between both, the real Truth is discover'd, 'tis usually more than either Party designs, especially in such a Case as this, where a certain Set of Gentlemen, of no small Power and Influence, in the North, are so much interested in preventing an Enquiry. That the real Truth, in this Case, has never been fairly set forth, I am fully persuaded for this Reason :

Because, while various Restrictions have been laid on the greatest Part of the Dealers in Coals ; the Company of Lightermen laid open ; and the Price of Coals at *London* (that is, after they are become the Property of the Ship Owners) subjected to the Direction of the *Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen*, and all to no Purpose, a Monopoly of the Commodity, at the Fountain Head, has been forming undisturbed ; and is now so thoroughly established, as almost to defy Opposition. In Consequence of this Monopoly, the first Cost of Coals, in general, has been advanced within these seven Years, fifteen *per Cent.* and, of many of the inferior Sorts, twenty *per Cent.* above what they had been sold at for Time almost Immemorial ; besides a saving to the Coal Owners, in another Way, of above nine *per Cent.* which is now no more paid. Nor is it to be doubted, but by the same Methods which

which procured this Advance, a much larger may be made, whenever the Monopolizers are pleased but to ask it.

That the Advance, though less in Appearance, is not less in Reality, than I have placed it above, will appear from the Books of any Ship that has used the Trade, but twelve or fourteen Years; and may also be shewn thus.

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>
A Ship of 300 <i>London</i> Chaldron cannot now be loaded at <i>New-</i> <i>castle</i> with less than 160 <i>Newcastle</i> Chaldron of any of the better Sorts of Coals, which, at 13 <i>s.</i> amount to ————	104	00
Less than seven Years ago such a Ship would be loaded with 150 Chaldrons (for so much at least there is Difference in the Mea- sure) at 12 <i>s.</i> which amount to——	90	00
Difference advanced on 90 <i>l.</i> being } above 15 <i>per Cent.</i> ————	14	00

But in the Year 1731. Coals in general were sold at nine Shillings and six Pence, and the Difference between that Year and now stands thus.

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>
Now 160 Chaldrons, at 13 <i>s.</i> as above	104	00
In the Year 1731. 150 Chaldrons } at 9 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> ————	71	05
Difference advanced on 71 <i>l.</i> 5 <i>s.</i> be- } ing 46 <i>l.</i> <i>per Cent.</i> ————	32	15

The

		l.
The whole annual Vend of Coals from <i>Newcastle</i> and <i>Sunder-</i> <i>land</i> , is estimated to be upwards of 420,000 <i>Newcastle</i> Chaldrons, which at 13 s. per Chaldron, a-	}	273,000
mounts to ———		
The same Quantity at 9 s. 6d. a-	}	189,500
mounts to ———		
Advanced on the annual Vend ———		83,500

Now, if it can be made appear, *and that without attempting to set the Value of Gentlemen's real Estates*, that Coals will afford a good and sufficient Profit at 9 s. 6d. per Chaldron; then is all this 83,500 l. an absolute Tax, raised by virtue of this Monopoly, on such Parts of the Kingdom as are supplied with Coals from these Places; to the no small Discouragement of a great Number of Manufacturers, such as Dyers, Sugar-Bakers, Brewers, Distillers, Glass and Salt Makers, Smiths, Founders, &c. and to the great Oppression of the Poor. Let us therefore see how the Case stands.

Many of the Coal Mines now wrought are rented at certain Prices per Ten, which Ten contains from Sixteen to Twenty two *Newcastle* Chaldron. The Rent per Ten is not always the same, but I have heard of none that exceeds 15 s. few pay so much. There are several Mines yet untouched, which the Proprietors would willingly let at that Price, and allow the Ten to be Twenty *Newcastle* Chaldron.

As

As to all the Charge of sinking Pits, digging and drawing up Coals, Carriage, Repairs of Ways, &c. as soon as a Colliery is won, and ready to work, there are Undertakers ready to engage for them at stated Prices: Way-leaves (of which more by and by) are uncertain. I have allowed for them Fifteen Shillings *per* Ten in the following Calculation, which, I am satisfied, in the Whole, rather exceeds, than falls short of the Truth.

Suppose then a Lease for Thirty Years, of a Colliery that will afford but 1000 Tens, or 20,000 *Newcastle Chaldron per Annum*, and admit that a Sum of 6000 Pounds be expended in winning the Colliery; that is, in preparing it to be wrought, by clearing the Water, &c. and in Materials for working it.

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
To replace this Principal in 30 Years, at 1000 Tens <i>per An-</i> <i>num</i> , or 30,000 Tens in all, is <i>per</i> Ten — — — — }	0	04	00
Rent as beforementioned — — — —	0	15	00
Digging Coals, and all Char- ges to bring them above Ground — — — — }	2	00	00
Carriage is from 6 <i>s.</i> 8 <i>d.</i> to a- bout 40 <i>s.</i> according to the Distance: I allow the largest — }	2	00	00
Repairs of Ways and Waggons differ likewise in Proportion to the Distance; few amount to so much as — — — — }	0	10	00
Carried over — — — —	5	09	00

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Brought over —————	5	09	00
Way-leaves at the present exor- bitant Rate —————	0	15	00

Total Charge of a Ten of Coals laid on the Staith or Wharf at the River side —————	}	6	04	00
--	---	---	----	----

Charges from the Staith to the Ship (exclusive of 13 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i> <i>per</i> Keel paid by the Buyer) are Fittage, 12 <i>d.</i> <i>per</i> Chal. and Keel or Lighter hire 3 <i>d.</i> $\frac{1}{2}$, in all 15 <i>d.</i> $\frac{1}{2}$, which is <i>per</i> Ten	}	1	05	10
--	---	---	----	----

Total Charge of a Ten put on board a Ship —————	}	7	09	10
--	---	---	----	----

Then the total Charges of one Year's Vend, <i>viz.</i> 1000 Tens or 20,000 Chaldrons, will be	}	7491	13	04
20,000 Chaldron sold at 9 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> amount to —————	}	9500	00	00

From which deduct the Charge above, there will remain Pro- fit —————	}	2008	06	08
--	---	------	----	----

Admitting that a Stock of 10,000 *l.* in the Whole (that is to say, including the 6000 *l.* supposed to be expended at setting out) be necessary to carry on this Affair, 9 *s.* 6 *d.* *per* Chaldron will afford 20 *per Cent.* Profit, which is greatly above the Par of Profit made of Money in large Trades. The present Price, of
thir-

thirteen Shillings *per* Chaldron, affords above 65 *per Cent*.

It will doubtless be asked here; If a Coal Mine affords such vast Profit, and there are, as I have said, several Coal Mines which the Proprietors would be willing to let; how happens it that they are not taken and wrought?

I answer, because the Monopolizers, commonly distinguished in the North by the Name of the Grand Allies, have rendered a great many of them unworkable *without their Leave*. What the principal Means are by which this has been accomplished, we come next to enquire.

It is well known these Gentlemen have engrossed into their Hands great Numbers of Collieries, which they take on Lease and work; reserving great Parts of those on their own Estates for futurity.

To the Owners of a Number of other Coal Mines, from whence much more than half the usual Vend, might, and probably would be supplied, did not their Practices prevent, they pay annual Considerations for letting their Mines lye unwrought.

They rent a great Number of Staiths, or Coal Wharfs, of which they make no use at all, save that of debarring others from coming there. Besides all this, they have got into their Possession, by one Means or other, so large a Share of all the Lands adjoining to the River *Tine*, that they have almost totally debarred all other Persons from Access to it with Coals, especially on the south Side, where the best Coals lie. And the like has been done with respect to the River *Wear*.

But the grand Article, and that without which all the rest would serve the Allies but little, is that of Way-leaves; which they had previously secured to themselves. This Term of Way-leave, as it may be somewhat mystical to Persons unacquainted with Collieries, I shall a little explain.

Many of the Collieries lie at considerable Distances from the River, some not less than five or six Miles. That the Coals may be brought down to the Water side at cheap Rates, it is necessary, not only to avoid the Windings of the common Roads, but also to have Waggon-ways, formed in a particular Manner for that purpose; consequently, it is often necessary to go over Grounds, where the Coal-Owner has no Right to a Way, without the Proprietor's Consent; for Leave of Way he must pay a Consideration, called a Way-leave, which is frequently exorbitant.

Great Numbers of these Way-leaves, the Grand Allies have engrossed into their own Hands, and pay dead Rents for many of them not to use them, but to exclude every body else. So that it is now no easy Matter to find an unwrought Colliery, which one or other of them has not effectually stopped up the Way to.

The Proprietors, by Consequence, are obliged, either to let them lie unwrought, or to grant Leases of them to these Gentlemen on their own Terms.

The aforesaid Gentlemen having, by these Methods, secured to themselves little less than an absolute Monopoly of all Coals about *Newcastle*, they soon found it in their Power to enhance the Price; and accordingly we have seen that
done

done without any apparent Reason. I say without any *apparent* Reason; for I never heard any offered, save this, *That the Coal Owners are at more Expence now than formerly.* That they are in fact at any more Expence in Digging, Carriage, &c. of any Quantity of Coals now, than they have been at any Time heretofore about the like Quantity, I absolutely deny, and challenge them to prove. The dead Rents indeed, paid for Way-leaves, Staiths and Collieries, of which they make no use, come to a great Sum, and will probably, if a Stop be not put to their Proceedings (in a few Years) amount to a vast deal more.

But, is that a Reason for enhancing the Price? Is it not Injury enough to the Public, that so necessary a Commodity is monopolized? Must they be farther loaded with the Charge of engrossing it? It cannot surely be pretended, and therefore, as they can offer no better Reason for this Advance, I think it may be safely said, they have no Reason for it at all.

In short, the present Price is certainly a most unreasonable one, unless the above Account of the Charge be greatly short of the Truth, as it is more than probable they will pretend it to be. But to this I answer, I have in most of the Articles even exceeded the ordinary Rate; and am fully persuaded that it is not too small, from the Price that Coals are sold at in the Neighbourhood of *Newcastle*; and for Exportation. The Charge I have allowed above is about 6s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$ per *Newcastle* Chaldron, exclusive of Fittage and Keel-hire. Whereas the Glass and Salt-makers there pay, even now, no more than 6s. per Chaldron. Before the late Agreement of

the Coal Owners, they paid no more than 4s. 6d. 4s. 9d. or at most 5s. *per* Chaldron. I can't suppose but this Price in general at least answers the Charge of Coals on the Staith or Wharf, if it allows no Profit.

It is indeed pretended, that the Coals sold at that Price are a bad Sort, not any ways fit to be shipped, being wrought out of the foul Seams. This may have been true in former Times, but since their late Agreement (unless I am greatly misinformed) it is not uncommon to see two Vessels, *viz.* a Keel and a Pan-boat loading at the same Time, from the same Staith, and same Heap, one for *London* at 13s. *per* Chaldron, the other for the Salt Pans, or Glafs-houses, at 6s. *per* Chaldron. But admit these Pan-Coals, as they are called, to be wrought out of foul Seams: It is apprehended that foul Seams cannot be wrought, for less Charge than the better Seams. And it is hard to suppose, that any foul Seam would be wrought, and the Coals carried perhaps several Miles to the Water side, if the Price they are sold at did not answer the Charge.

Now, as it no way appears, that the Charges attending Pan-Coals are less than those attending any other Sort; and Pan-Coals are sold at no more than 6s. *per* Chaldron, I think it may fairly be inferred, that the Charge of Coals in general, laid on the Staith, does not much exceed that Sum. The Charge from the Staith to the Ship (so much of it, I mean, as is paid by the Coal Owner) is a stated Thing, and well known to be 15d. $\frac{1}{2}$ *per* Chaldron, which added to the former Charge of 6s. 2d. $\frac{1}{2}$, makes 7s. 6d. for the total Charge.

If

If any one should, notwithstanding, think fit to object to this Charge, it is hoped he will point out the particular Articles where the Error lies, and not give an Answer in gross Sums; since that may justly be suspected of Fallacy. If he descends to Particulars, it is likewise hoped he will take all the Articles from some one particular Colliery, and specify which it is: Because there may be a Fallacy in taking part from one, and part from another; as for Example: If the Article of Digging Coals, and all Charges to bring them above Ground, estimated above at 2*l.* *per* Ten, be taken from one of the Collieries near the River, where the Charge of raising the Water is great, it may possibly amount to more than 2*l.* but then that is abundantly recompenced by the short Carriage and small Charge of Way-leaves: Which last Articles ought therefore to be taken from the same Colliery and no other.

By a Calculation thus fairly made, I doubt not but it will fully appear, that the real Charge of Rents, Way-leaves, Staith-room, Digging, Carriage, Fittage, &c. of Coals in general, amounts to no more than about 7*s.* 6*d.* *per* Newcastle Chaldron; and that consequently they may very well be sold at 9*s.* as they now usually are for Exportation, or for 9*s.* 6*d.* at most, even allowing the present exorbitant Charge of Way-leaves.

To shew to what a monstrous Pitch this last Article has been carried, one Instance may suffice. There is a small Common, not exceeding three hundred Yards over; the Herbage of the whole Common is not, nor ever was, worth 20*s.* *per* *Annum*. For Leave of a
Way

Way over this small Pittance of Ground, otherwise almost useless, the late Mr. C——, as I am credibly informed, received annually, for some Years, above 2500*l.* Impositions of the like Nature, though, perhaps, not altogether so prodigious, are frequent, and scarce a Colliery is free from them.

Now admit that a Coal-way is 33 Foot wide, which I take to be abundantly sufficient; then a Mile of Way will take up four Acres of Ground. Admit that making that Way good, renders so much Ground for ever afterwards unfit for any other Use; and that consequently, as to the Surface, it is totally lost to the Owners. The utmost Extent of the annual Value of any Ground through which these Ways are made, exceeds not 20*s.* *per* Acre; some of it is not worth above 2*s.* *per* Acre; as among the rest, *Wickham Moor*, for a Way over which, an almost incredible Rent of near 3000*l.* *per Ann.* was, for a long Time, paid; though not so much as a whole Acre was damag'd by the Way. That a single Acre of, (otherwise next to useless) Ground, should, by a lucky Situation and artful Management, be made as profitable an Estate to the Owner, as three or four hundred Acres of better Land close adjoining, with a good Coal Mine into the Bargain, is surely something extraordinary. Twenty five Years Purchase is an ordinary Price for Land; but twenty five Thousand Years Value for an annual Rent, is a Novelty the World was heretofore unacquainted with.

The Advance of Price being now obtained, the next Step of the Allies was to force off
good

good and bad Coals all at one Rate : Whereas before, several inferior Sorts had, all along, been sold at 1 s. or 1 s. 6 d. *per* Chaldron less than the better Sorts. In order to this, such of these Gentlemen, who had diverse Mines each at work, some of very good Coals, others of a much inferior Nature, began to mix every one his better and worse Coals together, all in a Heap. Accordingly the Coals of eight several Collieries have, for some Years past, been thrown all on the same Staiths, and, for some Time, this Mixture was sent to *London*, under the Name of Tanfield Coals, and certify'd by the Fitter as such.

There is, indeed, a Law, by which every Fitter is obliged, under severe Penalties, to give a Certificate under his Hand, expressing out of what Collieries the Coals he puts on Board any Ship, are wrought and gotten ; and that Certificate is filed in *London*, at the *Lord Mayor's* Office, and to be shewn *gratis* to any Person desiring it : But this they regarded little ; for who could prove the Fraud but their own Servants ? Nor was it for some Time known, or even suspected. After a while, Murmurs arising about their Conduct in this Affair, they, apprehensive of the Penalties for false Certificates, began to certify them as Coals *usually called* Tanfield Coals. Some time after, not thinking themselves yet safe by this Equivocation, they began to express in their Certificates the Names of all those several Collieries, but mentioned no Proportion of the Mixture : This Method they still follow ; so that the Buyer never knows what he has for his Money, till he comes to
try

try the Commodity ; and then it is too late to seek a Remedy. Though, frequently, as there happen to be more or less of the better Sorts, there is a Difference of two or three Shillings *per* Chaldron, in real Value, between one Ship's Loading and another, though certified both alike.

This, to several large Consumers, who require Coals of a particular Quality, is a greater Grievance than all the rest ; because, besides the Disappointment, they suffer great Damage other ways, perhaps to the spoiling Goods of considerable Value ; and yet this mixed Stuff, they must, in part at least, be content with ; for it is very difficult, if not impossible, for all of them, as the Case now stands, to procure sufficient Quantities of Mrs. Pitts's, or Lord *Windsor* and *Dunkeron's* Coals, the only Sorts fit for their Purpose, now sent neat.

When these mix'd Coals had lost their Credit at Market, and the usual Method of private Premiums would no longer keep up the Quantity of their Vend ; but such other Coal Owners, as sent their Coals unmixed, had better Demand, and began to increase their Vend apace ; while that of the mixed Coals declined in Proportion ; a Method was sought to bring all the rest of the Coal Owners into their Scheme. But some being refractory, they lower'd the Price all on a sudden from 12*s.* to 9*s.* 6*d.* *per* Chaldron ; nay, for some short Time, to 9*s.* however, at 9*s.* 6*d.* they were sold for the greatest Part of one Year, and would, in all Probability, so have continued, had no indirect Methods been used to enhance the Price. But, in the mean Time,

no Endeavours were omitted to persuade, or compel the Refractory to comply to their Measures.

At length, about the Beginning of the Year 1732, they brought all the Coal Owners that were considerable, to Terms, and an Accommodation was settled amongst them; in consequence of which, Coals were raised again immediately to 12s. and so continued, for some Time. During this Time, the Measure of Coals was gradually shorten'd a sixteenth Part, or more. In the Year 1736, they thought fit to raise them to 13s. and also to rid themselves of a Charge of about 12d. *per* Chaldron; which, whether they are willing to own it or not, they had, for a great Number of Years, voluntarily paid to the Dealer here.

Whether the Agreement made in or about the Year 1732, was, at that Time, reduced to writing, or barely verbal, I am no ways able to say: But that something of this Nature was put in writing, and signed by certain Gentlemen, or their Agents, about October 1737, is, I believe, too notorious to be denied.

What the Terms of this private Accommodation were, is not, nor perhaps, ever will be publickly known; for common Prudence, in a Case of this Nature, dictates Secrecy. However, a Multitude of strong Circumstances, as well as the common Report in all those Parts (which I never heard contradicted) concur to prove, that they have, in some Shape or other, stipulated the particular Quantities, which each Owner shall vend: For it is well known, that whenever the better

Sorts, which have a quick Vend, have got before hand with their Quantity, their Carriages have been laid off, and their Delivery of Coals intirely stop'd for several Days, if not Weeks together, without any other apparent Reason, than to give room to the Owners of inferior Sorts, to force off their Share.

When, in a Commodity so necessary for the common Uses of Life, as well as for various Manufactures, as Coals are, Impositions are carried to this vast Height; it is to be hoped the Legislature will take the Business under their Cognizance, and to so extraordinary an Evil, apply proportionate Remedies.

As Way-leaves are the Ground-work of all the Fabric; suppose a Law made to this Effect: That proper Persons shall be appointed to fix the Price, which shall henceforward be paid for such Way-leaves as are now subsisting; and, with respect to all Mines hereafter to be wrought, not only to determine what Prices shall be paid for Ways; but likewise (where they shall see it necessary for the easier or better working of a Colliery) to direct where, and through what Grounds such Ways shall be made; the Coal Owner paying always such Consideration as shall by the said Persons be appointed: That Consideration, in no Case, to exceed three or four Times the ordinary Value of the Land. And that all Grants, Covenants and Contracts, of any Kind whatsoever, tending to the Restriction of any Owner of any Coal Mine, from the Use of any Way, now, or heretofore in being, or to be hereafter appointed, be rendered null and void. And farther, that where any
Coal-

Coal-way, already laid, may be used for any other Colliery than those it was made for; the Owner of such other Mine shall be admitted to make Use of it, paying his Proportion of the Cost of making and repairing such Way; which Cost shall likewise be ascertained by the said Persons so appointed as aforesaid. I see not what there would be in such a Law, either unreasonable, injurious to any Person, or inconsistent with the Practice of the Legislature, on the like, or perhaps, less important Occasions heretofore. For,

We have many Instances, wherein (the Publick being concerned,) the Legislature have thought fit to compel private Persons to part with their Property, allowing them a reasonable Consideration affixed by proper Persons commissioned for that Purpose.

How common is it, in Case of making a River navigable, for the Benefit, perhaps, of the Trade of a single Town, that Commissioners are appointed to settle the Value of such Lands as it is necessary to make Cuts through: The Commissioners of Sewers have the like Power in all Counties where it is necessary to drain fenny or watery Lands. If then it be not unreasonable, for the Benefit of a single Town, and a few Places adjacent, or for the winning a small Tract of Land, thus to make bold with private Property: Surely, much less can it be so in this Case, where, at least, one sixth Part of the Kingdom is concerned, and in which, “to prevent any Imposition, or
“enhancing of Price, tends greatly to the Improvement of the Manufactures and Navigation of this Kingdom, by breeding and

“ employing many Thousands of skilful Ma-
 “ riners for the Service of his Majesty and
 “ Defence of the Realm, and to the Relief of
 “ the Poor.”

The Coal Owners, who, some of them, receive considerable Sums of Money for Way-leaves through their own Grounds, can certainly make no Objection to such a Law, consistent with their own Conduct the last Year. For, it was at their Instance chiefly, that, for an Experiment, as they were pleased to term it, an Act was then passed, to empower the *Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen* of the City of *London*, for one Year, to fix the Price of Coals brought into that Port, which are more than one Half of the whole Vend of *Newcastle* and Places adjacent.

Had not the Legislature judged the Price of Coals to be a Matter of Importance to the Public, they never would have made such a Law, which yet must be look'd upon as imperfect, while the Price is enhanced in the North, before they become the Property of those Persons who import them to *London*. The *Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen* ought, and, no doubt, will always have Regard to the Price the Importer is obliged to pay for them, since he is no way answerable for a Thing it is not in his Power to remedy.

The Coal Owners cannot, I say, consistently with their own Conduct, make any Objection of Weight to the above Proposal. The Price of Coals, after they are become the Property of the Ship Owners, is subjected to a certain Authority, and that at the Instance of the Coal Owners themselves; and it no ways
 ap-

appears, that any Practices of the Ship-Owners have been injurious to the Public in any degree to be compared with those Impositions of Way-leaves, dead Rents, mix'd Coals, &c. Nor is the Ship-Owner's Property, that I know of, any less sacred than that of those other Gentlemen. Their experimental Law, for I venture to call it theirs, since it was of their own proposing, is evidently incomplete, and not sufficient to answer the Purpose, unless all Monopolies and Combinations in the Trade from first to last be effectually prevented.

For remedy of one Abuse, in respect to the different Sorts of Coals, it is already enacted, That every Fitter shall give a Certificate under his Hand, expressing what Sort or Sorts of Coals he shall load on board any Ship, and what Price was paid for the same. But the good Intent of this Law has been totally evaded, by the Mixtures abovementioned. They have, indeed, as is said before, for about two Years past, set forth out of what Collieries the Coals were wrought and gotten, but never specify the particular Quantities of each Sort. It is true, they alledge, that it is impracticable so to do; because the Coals are all mixed on the Staiths, as the Waggons come in. But why are they so mixed? It can't be for want of Staith-room; for Staiths they have in abundance, of which they make no use. There is, in short, no other apparent Reason for it, than by that means to force off the inferior Sorts at the best Price, to the great Injury of the Consumers.

This Practice might be stopped, by obliging the Coal Owners to keep the several Sorts separate on the Staiths, which they may very well

well do, without any considerable Increase of Charge. And likewise obliging the Fitters, when two or more Sorts of Coals are put on board any Ship, to specify in their Certificates the particular Quantities and Prices of each Sort, that so the Buyer may be enabled to judge what he is to purchase.

As there cannot be any Reason given, for that so frequent Practice of paying yearly Rents to the Owners of Coal Mines, by way of Consideration for letting the Mines lay unwrought; save that of Monopolizing the whole Colliery into the Hands of the Grand Allies, who put themselves to this extraordinary Expence, with a View, no doubt, of being repaid with abundant Interest. And as Monopolies of all Kinds are known to be injurious to Trade in general, 'tis surely requisite that these Practices should be put an end to. This may probably be done, if it be enacted, That the Paying or Receiving any annual Rent, or other Consideration, for letting a Coal Mine lay unwrought, shall henceforth be absolutely illegal. And that all Bargains and Contracts to that Effect, as well as for Ways and Staiths not used, whether now subsisting, or hereafter to be made, be henceforth null and void to all Intents and Purposes. And that all Coal Mines now held on Lease, shall be set to work, and continued and kept at work, in such manner as Coal Mines usually are, within the Space of two Years now to come, otherwise all such Leases to be void, and of none Effect; and that all Leases hereafter to be made, shall in like manner become null and void, unless the Mines therein mentioned be so wrought within

the Space of two Years next following the Commencement of such Lease; and that the Proprietor of the Ground shall be at full Liberty, and have full Power, to grant another Lease of the same Mine, such former Lease notwithstanding.

Another Practice of the Coal-Owners, of giving underhand Premiums to Lightermen, or other Venders of Coals, in order to retain them steady in their Interest, I esteem both iniquitous in it self, and highly injurious to the Trade in general, and therefore cannot pass it over without Notice.

This Practice, though once, on a famous Occasion, imputed to the Lightermen, as if they extorted those Premiums, was originally contrived by some particular Coal Owners, then imitated by others, and by degrees made general, and all by their own voluntary Act. And though there is at present little or nothing of that kind practised, it is highly probable certain Gentlemen will again have recourse to it, if their other Schemes are destroyed. The Legislature have long endeavoured to prevent it, but hitherto without Effect, for it continued long after the last Law, which laid such Penalties on it. For my part, I cannot help wishing, that the Coal Owner who next gives it, may forfeit all his Collieries, and the Receiver all his Substance, and both be prohibited from ever dealing in Coals for the future.

It is hoped it will not be thought, that any Thing in the above Proposals is extravagant, or that the Remedies pointed at are more violent than the Nature of the Evil requires. The Quantity of Coals brought from Newcastle, and

and the Parts adjacent, is large; the Consumers of those Coals are, at least, one sixth of all the House-keepers in the Kingdom of *England*. Great Quantities of them are consumed in Manufactures, and these it concerns us to encourage in all kinds, for we have active and vigilant Neighbours, continually labouring to out-do us; and who never fail to make their Advantage of the least Slip of ours in that respect.

It is certain that the Price of Coals, on a Medium, is advanced 2 *s.* 6 *d.* or 3 *s.* per *London* Chaldron (besides one Shilling extraordinary this Year, for the high Wages paid to Sailors) without any additional Tax, or apparent Increase of Charge; is it not then natural to conclude there must be Iniquity at the Bottom? There are about 480,000 Chaldron annually delivered in the Port of *London* only, the Advance of 2 *s.* 6 *d.* per Chaldron on this Quantity is 60,000 *l.* a Sum equal to a Tax of 9 *d.* in the Pound, at least, on Land and Houses, in those Parts where they are consumed. The grandest Imposition, perhaps, that ever was in any one Trade, and all for the private Benefit of a very small Number of Men.

I say all this whole Tax is imposed for the Benefit of a very few Men. For, let us trace the Trade through. The Lightermen, who are the Venders here, can have no Share in it; because the Price is made before they come into their Hands. Ship Owners have no share in it; for they made as much Freight by a Voyage, when Coals were sold on a Medium, at 22 *s.* or 22 *s.* 6 *d.* at most, as they can now at 25 *s.* as will appear from the Books of any Ship of but eight or nine Years standing in the Trade,
and

and the Masters both got as much Money to themselves, and divided as much to their Owners then as now. The Difference then must lie where we have placed it, *viz.* with the Coal Owners, unless, perhaps, they give the Fitters (of whom by and by) a Feeling with them. And what Reason have they for this Advance? Coals are still plenty enough, and will continue to be so for many Ages to come. The Price of Labour, or Materials there, is in no kind advanced: The Charge of sinking Pits is not more: That of clearing a Mine from Water considerably lessen'd, first by the Invention of Fire Engines; and again since, by the Expiration of the Patent granted to the Inventor. Carriage is as cheap now as ever. There remain then only Way-leaves, Dead-Rents for Mines not wrought, and Ways, and Staiths not used, nor by them wanted, and vexatious Law-suits, all the rest must be Addition to the Profit they made before, which was very great, all Things considered.

'Tis here then, and here only, the Source of the Evil lies; nor can any Method be devised effectually to cure it, without first beginning here. Neither ought the Grandeur of a few Men to be any bar to an Enquiry into, and Regulation of their Conduct, if it shall appear injurious to their Fellow-Subjects.

Having thus set forth the unparallelled Impositions of this Set of Men, and hinted at some Methods for preventing the like indirect Practices for the future, the probable Consequences of such a Regulation come next to be considered.

By the several Sorts of Coals being kept unmixed, or the Mixtures, if there are any, particularly specified in the Certificate, the Buyer will no longer be imposed on, as now, in the Quality of the Goods he is to purchase.

When the Way-leaves are laid open, or rendered accessible to every Owner of a Coal Mine on reasonable Terms, and the Staith-Rooms likewise, many Mines, which cannot now be wrought, will be set to work. The Increase of the Number of Mines will naturally reduce the Price of the Commodity to its just Standard, *the Par of other Trades*; more especially as it will not only destroy the present, but render all future Combinations among the Owners much more difficult to be brought about. And if perchance any Combination should hereafter be attempted by them, it is next to impossible that it should be either steady or durable, seeing it will want the only Basis on which all former ones have stood, *viz. The exclusive Privilege of Way-leaves*. So long as these are open, whenever the Price is by any Means enhanced, so as to yield a more than ordinary Profit, new Adventurers will still be found to work other Mines, who must of Necessity, from Time to Time, destroy all possible Measures enter'd into for exacting a more than reasonable Price.

From the Dissolution of the Combinations of Coal Owners another great Advantage will necessarily follow, that is, the Prevention of all future Combinations of the Masters and Owners of Ships using that Trade; for it was never yet known that any Agreement among this large Body of Men could subsist half a Summer

together, unless supported by the Gentlemen in the North, these last being once disunited, there will remain no Band to tie the Ship Masters together in any durable Combination, nor any way to empower them to enhance the Price.

These seem to be the natural Consequences of the Regulation proposed. If these are once obtained, there can remain nothing to disturb the Trade for the future, except only the Practices of the Fitters, of whom we come now to speak.

The Hostmen or Fitters at *Newcastle* are an incorporated Company; their Business is to load Ships with Coals, which they carry from the Coal Owners Staiths or Wharfs, on board the Ships in Keels; these Keels are a kind of Lighters, and always carry eight *Newcastle* Chaldron each.

Notwithstanding the Law beforementioned obliging them to give true Certificates of what sort of Coals they put on board any Ship, and that under severe Penalties; yet encouraged, as it is probable, by the Example of their Masters, the Coal Owners, in the Practice of mixing Coals aforementioned, so bold are they grown in the Transgression of this Law, that it can be proved, that where a Ship has had part of her Loading of one Sort of Coals (or perhaps of the above Mixture) and the Remainder of a different or inferior Sort, the Fitter has certified them to be all of that Sort which he thought would be most in demand at Market. Nay, some have given two different Certificates for the same Loading of Coals, for the Master to make use of either as he should see Occasion. In this, I own, the Master is

equally blameable, but the Consequence to the Consumer is the same. There is great Reason to suspect that there has been more than usual of this Work this last Year ; for it is known concerning one particular Sort of Coals sold now at *Newcastle* at an inferior Price, that great Quantities of them used to come to *London* ; but this Year few have appeared under that Name, though large Quantities of that Sort have been dug.

Besides this Piece of bare-faced Knavery, if any Judgment is to be formed from their Conduct, they likewise have their private Contracts, by which the Trade is greatly injured. Many, or rather all the Fitters, hold Parts of Ships using the Coal Trade, and they seem to have agreed, that no Fitter shall load a Ship of which another Fitter holds a Part, though ever so small ; perhaps $\frac{1}{32}$ or $\frac{1}{64}$. The Consequence of this, is, that the Master of every Ship, in which a Fitter is concerned as Part-Owner, must perpetually bear such Usage as his Owner is pleased to bestow on him, whether it be with respect to short Measure, bad Coals, or Delays in Loading. This Agreement of theirs took Place about the Year 1736. before which Time a Master, who had no Fitter concerned in his Ship, could have a considerable Return made to himself, out of the then set Price from the Fitter, as an Acknowledgment for the Favour of Loading with him. Or if the Master was one of the honest Sort, who thought this Method of taking Money back into his own Pocket a kind of Fraud upon the rest of the Owners, he might get loaded with $\frac{1}{10}$ less Number of Keels ; that is to say, a
Ship

Ship which would ordinarily take in 20 Keels, if loaded by a Fitter that was Part-Owner, would, by a Fitter not an Owner, be as well loaded with 18 Keels, and better Coals too. Thus they have long made a Property of the Owners of such Ships as they have had the least Share in; but never, before their late Agreement, in any degree equal to what they now do.

I have heard it computed by some of the most judicious Masters, that the Difference in Profit between a Ship thus engaged to a particular Fitter, and one that is not, is of late Years not less than fifty Pounds *per Annum*. In this Case the Master has no Remedy; for to complain to his Fitter is only to expose himself to ridicule; to seek a Change is in vain; to purchase the Part impracticable; for none of them will sell willingly; nor is there any Method to compel them to it without a tedious Suit in *Chancery*.

It appears at first sight, as if the Ship Owners only were injured by this Conduct; but if it be considered, that the Fitters are Part-Owners of a very great Majority of the Ships using the Trade, 'tis manifest that it must affect the Price of Coals at Market very considerably, and the Consumers finally bear the Burthen.

There is likewise great Reason to believe, that the Fitters have also stipulated the particular Quantities which each of them shall vend, as well as the Coal Owners, which cannot but be equally injurious to the Trade.

For Remedy of these Abuses and Irregularities of theirs, and preventing all their future Combinations, I see no Method so likely as
that

that of laying open the Trade, and giving Liberty for any Person or Persons, to exercise the same, without Lett or Molestation from the incorporated Company of Hostmen; as was done in the Case of the Lightermen and Watermens Company in the Port of *London*, in the Year 1732, for Practices much less injurious to the Public than those of the Fitters at *Newcastle*, &c.

And whereas the Impositions of the Fitters on such Ships as they hold Parts in, are found to be greatly injurious to all the rest of the Owners of such Ships, and a Discouragement to Navigation; and not only so, but likewise greatly detrimental to the Trade in general, I think it is but reasonable, that in Case the Majority of the Owners of any Ship shall judge themselves liable to any Imposition, or shall suffer any Damage by Means of any Fitter holding Part of such Ship, then such Fitter shall, within Days after Notice to that Purpose, in writing, given him under the Hands of the Majority of the Owners, nominate a fit and proper Person, who, together with another Person to be nominated by the said Owners, shall determine and ascertain the Value of such Fitters Part; who, on receiving such Sum of Money as the same shall be by them valued at, to be paid him out of the first Earnings of the Ship, or otherwise, in present Money, if the said Owners shall think fit, shall absolutely quit all Right and Title to the same; such Part to remain thenceforward the joint Property of the rest of the Owners of the said Ship.

For

For preventing their scandalous Practice of giving false or double Certificates, it is hoped the Legislature will take all reasonable Measures. It might not, perhaps, be amiss, that they were obliged to express in their Certificates, the particular Quantity of each Sort of Coals on Board any Ship, with the distinct Price paid for each ; but likewise to attest the same upon Oath, before a proper Magistrate, if thereto required ; and that they be laid under severe Penalties for giving any false or imperfect Certificate ; and, in Case of Perjury, be liable to such Punishments as are by Law to be inflicted for that Crime, when the same is committed in a Court of Record.

I cannot conclude without adding one Hint more with respect to Way-leaves. It would certainly be a laudable Thing, that they were entirely laid open and free, for the Benefit of the Public, if any Method could be found, equitably to raise a Fund for the first Purchase of them : An obvious one occurs in the Coal Trade it self.

Coals consumed at, and about *Newcastle* and *Sunderland*, are charged with no Duties. All Coals Waterborn in Ships, are charged with a Duty of 5 *s.* *per* Chaldron, in all Parts of the Kingdom where they are imported : And in the Port of *London*, with a farther Duty of 3 *s.* *per* Chaldron, commonly called the *Church Duty* ; and also the Metage and Orphans Duties, which are 14 *d.* *per* Chaldron, besides the Charge of Labourers (no where else paid) which is, on a Medium, about 12 *d.* *per* Chaldron more. This makes a vast Disparity in the Profit of some Manufactures
car-

carried on there, or in any other Places. For Example ; Suppose a Manufacturer consume 1000 *London Chaldron per Annum*,

l.

At *London* they cannot be laid in under 28 *s. per Chaldron* ; which } 1400
amounts to

At *Newcastle* they were formerly sold at 4 *s. 6 d.* now for 6 *s. per Newcastle Chaldron* ; so they may } 200
very well be laid in at 4 *s. per London Chaldron*

The Difference is 1200

Again ; at *Lymington* they cannot be laid in under 22 *s. per London Chaldron* at least ; which is } 1100

At *Newcastle*, as above, at 4 *s.* — 200

So the Difference there is 900

And the Difference between *London* and *Lymington* } 300

These Differences consider'd, it is really surprising how several Trades can subsist elsewhere than at *Newcastle*, *Sunderland*, or some Place thereabouts. However, the Disproportion cannot but be a great Discouragement to the Growth and Improvement of these Manufactures in all other Places, especially considering the Cheapness of some Commodities, and the Proportion the Price of Coals bears to the

the Value of the Goods made. The same Disproportion there must be in many Trades, as Smiths, Brewers, Dyers, Distillers, Sugar-Bakers, Glafs and Salt-Makers, &c.

Another Thing relating to the Coal Trade, which I have often wonder'd at, is, that the Duty of Coals exported to foreign Parts, should be so much lower than that for our home Consumption. For Coals are not, I apprehend, such a Kind of Commodity as we must of Necessity either send abroad cheap, or not send at all; we have no Body, that I know of, to interfere with us in this Article. There are many Trades abroad which cannot well be carried on without Coals; and I can see no Reason why we need be afraid of lessening the Exportation, by raising that Duty even as high as that of *London*. It is now no more than 6s. the *Newcastle* Chaldron; which is nearly equal to 3s. 2d. the *London* Chaldron; being 6s. *per* Chaldron less than the *London* Duty; which is in all 9s. 2d. The Difference between the Freight from *Newcastle* or *Sunderland*, to *Holland*, *Flanders*, and several Ports of *France*, and the Freight to *London*, is a meer Trifle; so that our Ship Masters can afford Coals much cheaper in any of those Places, than at *London*.

If the Legislature therefore should think fit to lay an additional Duty on Coals exported, and a Duty on all Coals consumed in *Newcastle* and *Sunderland*, &c. and apply the Money rising by those Duties to purchase the necessary Way-leaves, to the respective Collieries that now are, or hereafter shall be wrought, for ever af-

ter to be made free for publick Use; it would help to alleviate the Tax where it is already paid, by reducing the prime Cost of Coals, and bring the Manufacturers, who consume large Quantities, somewhat nearer to an equal Footing in Trade.

It is, perhaps, peculiar to this Commodity, that in one Nation, and under one and the same Government, those Parts where the Goods are naturally cheapest, are exempt from all Duties to the Crown; and those other Parts, where in the Nature of the Thing they must be three Times as dear, are further charged with a Duty, exceeding the whole Cost of the Goods to Numbers of their Fellow-Subjects.

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